

Be a Better Meeting Attendee to Drive Effective Meetings

By Susan Schilke; March 1, 2019

Meetings are a mainstay of the business world. The dictionary definition is, “an event in which a group of people come together to discuss things or make decisions.” I am sure you’ve found that not all meetings are like this, but the best ones combine discussion and decision making.

TeamStrength meetings are all about improving the quality of members’ decisions. And this year, we’re also focused on improving the quality of your meetings within your organizations.

Last month, we asked members about the best meetings in your company. The answers were broad – from the annual kick-off meeting with the entire company, to strategic meetings to resolve client issues, to one-on-ones to set individual plans. The best meetings were annual, quarterly, monthly and even daily. They were balanced pretty evenly between including all team members and just leaders/managers – with a couple of favorites being one-on-ones. And members’ best meetings were equally balanced between strategic and tactical.

So great meetings come in many forms, but let’s be honest. So do bad meetings. We’ve been sharing resources on ways to avoid bad meetings, and ideas on how to drive more strategic thinking, problem solving and decision making in your meetings. But meetings are ultimately only as good as the participants, so here are our guidelines for you as a leader or member of the team to play a part in making your meetings more effective and actionable.

1. **Be prepared.** Take the time to review the agenda and any information prior to the meeting. Go one step further to make some notes on key data you want to share, ideas and suggestions you may have, and questions you want to ask.
2. **Be punctual.** Even better, be a few minutes early. There is an opportunity for relationship building in the moments leading up to a meeting, and your relationship with your fellow team members has a huge impact on everyone’s success.
3. **Be focused and in the meeting.** Put your phone away, turn off notifications or even better – leave it in your office. The moment you look at your phone during a meeting you send a clear message about your priorities. It will quickly erode the relationships you’ve been working to build.
4. **Be productive.** Share information, ask questions, and bring your ideas and suggestions without being married to them. Offer up your thoughts as contributions without selling them. Know that better ideas will emerge through collaboration. (It’s a superpower, remember?)
5. **Be curious.** You are one perspective of many in the meeting. Your fellow team members will bring other information, ideas and suggestions and in every meeting you attend, you can learn much more than you share. Soak it up and build on the discussion.
6. **Be positive.** Everyone has the same goal in a meeting – to move things forward in a way that is best for the company, the customers and the people in the room. There can be debate and discussion, but stay away from complaints and rants. They don’t add value. Look for the best in situations and each other, and work toward productive outcomes.
7. **Be accountable.** The best meetings lead to solutions, decisions and plans. Be ready to take on assignments, and then make sure you follow-through on your commitments. Everyone wants to be on a team where everyone is accountable.

Meetings are a vital part of success in any organization. When done right, meetings improve strategy, decisions and outcomes. As a leader, be a role model of a good meeting participant by following these rules, and watch the team follow your lead.